



The Virginia Saltwater Review

Plans and Statistics Department
2600 Washington Avenue, 3rd Floor
Newport News, VA 23607-0756
<http://www.mrc.virginia.gov>

Vol. 22, No. 28
December 5, 2008

by

Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division

OVERVIEW



December, a month for hunters and fishers, shoppers and carolers, the ring of the Salvation Army bells on so many corners, trying to be good for goodness sake children, and those that still are lucky enough to remember the joys of childhood and able to still enjoy multiple repeats of “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer”!



This is also a special time of year for many of our readers, but especially, our striped bass fishers! In the following fishing reports, you will note the big stripers are here, now! Of course, there is other action available, such as the offshore action for tuna, black sea bass and tautog (don't forget to donate to the Marine Sportfish Collection Project your tautog, post fillet, on page 7).



As this is the final edition for the 2008 Virginia Saltwater Review, we would like to thank all of our contributors for another successful season of working together, to provide anglers, near and far, a great overview of the true bounties of the Commonwealth of Virginia's marine fisheries. We also want to thank our dedicated staff members, Alicia, Mike, Holly, Joey, and the rest of the Department of Plans and Statistics, for their time, and devotion, in producing the review each week. This product is definitely a team effort.

We will return with the 2009 Virginia Saltwater Review next spring, for our 23rd year! Please remember to be courteous and safe when traveling to and from your favorite fishing spot, and responsible stewards of our natural resources.

And now, the fishing reports!

THE FISHING REPORT

Wachapreague

At Captain Zed's, there were reports of striped bass catches in and around the Wachapreague Inlet and just outside of the inlet. If the weather cooperates, flounder can be found in the area, and there continues to be reports of tuna around the 21-Mile Hill.

Cape Charles

According to staff at Chris' Bait and Tackle, striped bass have shown up very strong lately, with fish up to 59 pounds caught near buoy 18. A lot of fish were also found near buoys 36 and 38. Fish continue to bite well at the high rise and at the 3rd and 4th islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The local piers are also seeing striped bass action with a 37-pounder caught at the pier at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and several 25-pound fish coming in from the Kiptopeke Pier.

Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

Striped bass and tautog from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel were the hot topic at Cobb's Marina. There were two tautog citations, one was 10 pounds, 24 ¼ inches from the 4th island, and the other weighed in at 9 pounds, 1 ounce. Striped bass citations include a 44-inch release citation from the 3rd island, and a 49-pound, 14-ounce fish caught from the 1st island.

While no citations were reported from Sunset Boating Center, anglers are catching limits of decent-size stripers in the 23- to 26-pound range. Hot spots have been the 3rd island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnel. Staff at the boating center wishes everyone a happy holiday.

Numerous striped bass were reported from Salt Ponds Marina; most were found around the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Striped bass are beginning to bite in the area around the York River Fishing Center. The larger fish, over 50 pounds, are finally being caught. Staff reports anglers hooking striped bass under the Coleman Bridge. A few are fishing for tautog at the reefs as an alternate to the striped bass action.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

Large rockfish (striped bass) were caught from Ocean City on down to Oregon Inlet. The largest fish were found right at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. Live eels fished at the high rise area of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel at night and along the Eastern Shore from Plantation Light on down to the High Rise during the day have produced most of the large fish. Open water trolling was more productive in the coastal waters. Schools of large rock are being encountered from Corolla to Smith Island. Inside the bay, the York Spit area has been good. Wire-liners working the tubes of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel are catching rockfish in the slot range, quickly filling their limits with over and under fish.

The record speckled trout run continues. Citation-sized speckled trout were still being caught in large numbers in the Elizabeth River, and some continue to be caught inside of Rudee Inlet.

The other active fish in the bay is tautog. The structure of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, Cape Henry Wreck, and the various artificial reefs like the Back River Reef are holding populations of active fish.

The coastal wrecks are holding tautog also, but they are covered up with sea bass which makes catching a tautog a challenge. Of course, catching a bunch of big sea bass is not a bad thing. Wrecks like the Powell, Ricks, and the Triangle Reef are good sea bass spots right now. Wrecks further offshore like the Ocean Venture and the Washington also have jumbo sea bass holding on them.

Flounder can also be found around the structure of the coastal wrecks. Flounder were caught around the Triangle wrecks all winter long. Closer to shore, the Cape Henry Wreck was productive. Flounder will often winter over there.

Large bluefish are waiting to destroy some of your tackle in our coastal waters. Monster bluefish are being encountered in the vicinity of the Chesapeake Light Tower, at the Fish Hook, and on the South East Lumps. Some of these big blues are pushing 20 pounds, but so far, nobody has been able to top the 21.5-pound bluefish caught by Charles Southall while fishing at the Triangle Wrecks.

We may have missed our shot at giant bluefin tuna as they are catching them off of Cape Lookout now. You never know with bluefin tuna though. What we do have are the medium, 100-pound class. They have been encountered at the Triangle Wrecks, Fish Hook, and on the 10 Fathom Lump. These fish should be around all through December and maybe through January. This 100-pound class of bluefin is still being caught to the north of us so we will have a shot at these fish for awhile.

Offshore bottom fish like snowy grouper and blueline tilefish will be available all winter but now, you will also have to deal with the spiny dogfish, which have moved into our ocean waters.

If you want yellowfin tuna, head a little south. It has been a bit hit and miss, but there have been some good catches of tuna out of Oregon Inlet when the wind allows the boats to get out. The king mackerel bite out of Hatteras remains excellent.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

As I confer with anglers from other regions, I am reminded of how fortunate we are to have such a fantastic winter fishery along the Mid Atlantic. Many folks from other areas have already stowed their fishing gear, while local anglers are targeting almost as many species as some fisheries have available for the entire year! Virginia waters also offer great opportunity for those looking to go down into the record books. A young Virginia angler will have his chance, as nine-year-old Jake Garren of Ironto awaits approval of his pending IGFA Small Fry World Record for a 50lb, 14oz rockfish he caught while fishing in the Bay with his Dad this week. Jim Sheffield of Richmond also awaits his answer from the IGFA on his pending Line Class World Record for a 44-pound, 2-ounce striped bass he landed on four-pound test line in the same area this week.

As the Holiday season rapidly approaches, big stripers continue their push into local waters, where forty to fifty pounders are becoming common. Even a few 60-pounders are also beginning to show in the

same areas. Most of the larger fish are coming from boats either drifting eels along the channels and shoals of the bayside Eastern Shore area, or dipping eels along the high rise section of the CBBT. The best bite is happening on the falling tide lately, both day and night. Anglers are also beginning to report lots of bait and pods of working birds within the Bay and along the Virginia Beach ocean front, where trollers are picking up fish to over 40-inches. Remember the regulations for bay rockfish catches will change on the 21st of this month to one fish per person between 18 and 28-inches, or one fish over 34-inches. Rob Collins of Norfolk earned a state citation for a 44-pound trophy he boated while fishing at the 4th island of the CBBT recently. Surf anglers are also having good luck with keeper striped bass along the beach near Sandbridge and the Lesner Bridge inside Lynnhaven Inlet.

Shallow water anglers are finding excellent numbers of keeper-sized speckled trout and a few puppy drum within Rudee Inlet, with chartreuse grubs worked along the bottom working well. Kendall Osborne of Norfolk had a good speck day with a 24-inch citation he released while fishing with a fly rod inside Rudee Inlet this week. The best action is coming from the Elizabeth River, where good numbers of big specks averaging around 5-pounds or more are falling to both live and trolled baits. The Virginia Beach Fishing Center reports that puppy drum, along with schoolie-sized striped bass are biting well on cut mullet fished near the jetties just inside Rudee Inlet.

Jumbo sea bass are available on the ocean wrecks, along with chopper bluefish. Big bluefish are also moving inshore, where anglers are encountering choppers from 12 to 20 miles out from the beach. Flounder are still active on offshore structures, where big flatfish are jumping on fresh strip baits. A few of these fish are exceeding 6-pounds lately. Triggerfish are still a good bet on many offshore wrecks, with Dr. Julie Ball's crew reporting a catch of 33 triggers up to 4-pounds lately. Tautog, which have made a great showing this season, are still going strong for those fishing crab and clams on lower bay and ocean structures, with reported limits of fish up to 6-pounds. Deep droppers are finding a few blueline tilefish, wreckfish, and blackbellied rosefish, but the dog fish are beginning to move in, presenting a nuisance for anglers. This will only get worse as winter progresses.

Other than bluefin tuna, there is not much happening on the offshore scene. Schooling bluefin tuna are eluding many boats as they watch them roll and break on the surface, then disappear. But Dave Trax aboard the Oblivion put his crew on some good bluefin action at the Fingers this week. Dave's crew hooked four nice mid-sized fish, with one boated that weighed in at 112-pounds for Robert Bosley of Virginia Beach. These tuna can show up anywhere from the Chesapeake Light Tower to the edge of the Norfolk Canyon. The Fingers, the Fishhook, and the Hotdog are the favorite places to try lately. For a bigger challenge, the giant bluefins in excess of 200-pounds have now shown off the coast of Carolina.

Virginia Middle Bay

Fishing for striped bass has been productive and should be for the next few weeks. Water temperatures are dropping and the stripers will be heading south as the water continues to cool off. Stripers are still being caught in all of the usual areas like the jetties at the mouth of the Potomac River or any other structure you can find. They aren't very large, though, and probably will not get much bigger before they move out. Sea gulls will be your best friend in trying to find any schools that are working in more open areas.

Virginia Beach

At the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, anglers are finding plenty of striped bass at Cape Henry averaging between 25 and 30 pounds. The fishing is going very well, and boats are getting close to catching their limits. There are striped bass at the tunnels and islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Other than striped bass, there are numerous speckled trout in the inlet (several citations per day), and, last week, flounder citations were brought in from the Triangle Wreck.

Paula from Fisherman's Wharf Marina reports nice striped bass catching in the bay, particularly around the high rise of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. She noted catches near Cape Henry as well.

Outer Banks, NC

Weather is the key word for this time of year, and it can change very quickly, so make sure to keep an eye on the weather reports. Other than that your best bet to find fish is to talk to your local tackle shops, if they are open.

Offshore anglers can expect the yellowfin tuna along with a few wahoo and dolphin for variety. Striped bass and red drum can be found a little closer to shore, but this depends on water temperatures. If the water temperature stays relatively warm, expect the schools of stripers to stay closer to the Virginia line.

On the beaches, runs of striped bass will be your best bet. A few red drum and speckled trout may move through, but they tend to be a little further south unless you get a good warm period. Good areas to fish from shore include Cape Hatteras Point for red drum and around the jetties for speckled trout.

Inshore your best bet is again striped bass around any kind of structure. There is also the possibility of finding a school of speckled trout in deeper water like Oregon Inlet's Green Island Slough.

As the old saying goes "a bad day of fishing beats a good day at work", so enjoy any time you have on the water this winter.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

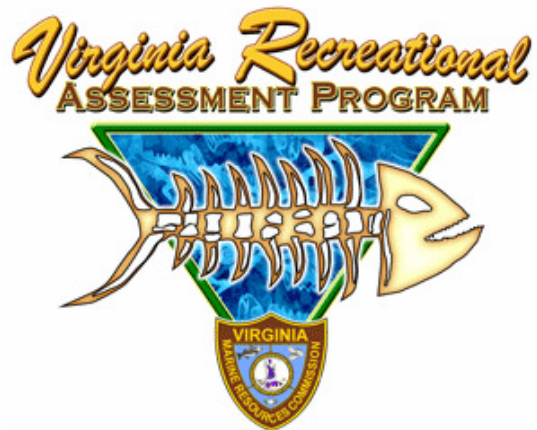
Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's [THE SALTWATER REVIEW](http://mrc.virginia.gov/swr/saltwaterreview.shtm) as the source of the fishing information.

Get Hooked!

Report at

www.vasaltwaterjournal.com

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be

extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at www.vasaltwaterjournal.com.

Virginia Marine Resources Commission
Recreational Fishing Online Reporting



June 16, 2008

Members: 1,457
Trips: 295
Catches: 3,941

Recreational Saltwater Fishing

Welcome Jgrist,

Red Drum Reports are Needed!

We are collecting length data from red drum that anglers catch-and-release. In 2009, there will be a coastwide (Virginia to Florida) stock assessment of the red drum population, and information is lacking on the catch-and-release of red drum outside of the management slot limit (18 to 26 inches).

New 2008 Tautog Regs

Closed Season	May 1 through June 24
Minimum Size Limit	14 inches
Possession Limit	4 per person












ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!

THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

***WANTS YOUR FISH....
TO MEASURE AND AGE.***

*You catch it, you fillet it,
but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,
please donate them to science.*

The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA		RED DRUM	
SHEEPSHEAD		BLACK DRUM	
SPADEFISH		TAUTOG	
TILEFISH		GROUPE	
KING MACKEREL		SPANISH MACKEREL	
BLUEFISH (OVER 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)			

**In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a
ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT, FOR EACH PARTICIPANT,
PER MONTH of the DONATION.**

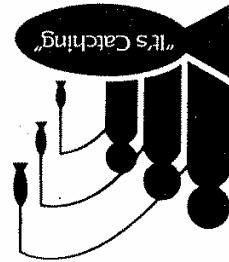
**Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:
Bell Isle Marine (Hampton) Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)
Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach) Wachapreague Marina
Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)**

As of 08/27/2008



FIRST CLASS MAIL

TAKE A FRIEND FISHING



FISHERIES PLANS/STATISTICS OFFICE
VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION
2600 WASHINGTON AVE., 3RD FLOOR
NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA 23607

Practice

CAREFUL CATCH

REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH

Exhaustion * Loss of Slime * Wounds * Time out of Water